


1944

## Christ in History, An Appreciation: An Address delivered before the graduating class of Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas, June, 1944.

G. H. P. Showalter

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### Recommended Citation

Showalter, G. H. P., "Christ in History, An Appreciation: An Address delivered before the graduating class of Harding College, Searcy, Arkansas, June, 1944." (1944). *Stone-Campbell Books*. Book 159.  
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Jesse Christ

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# CHRIST IN HISTORY

*An Appreciation*

BY

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G. H. P. SHOWALTER

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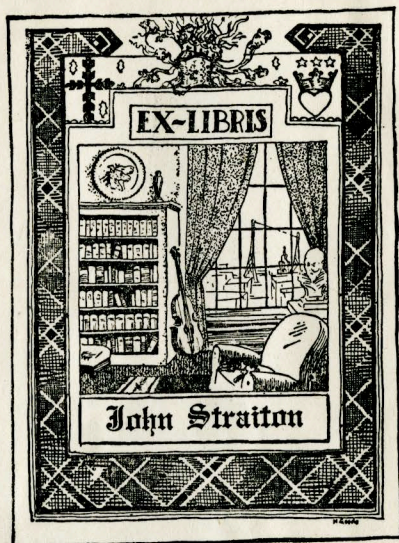
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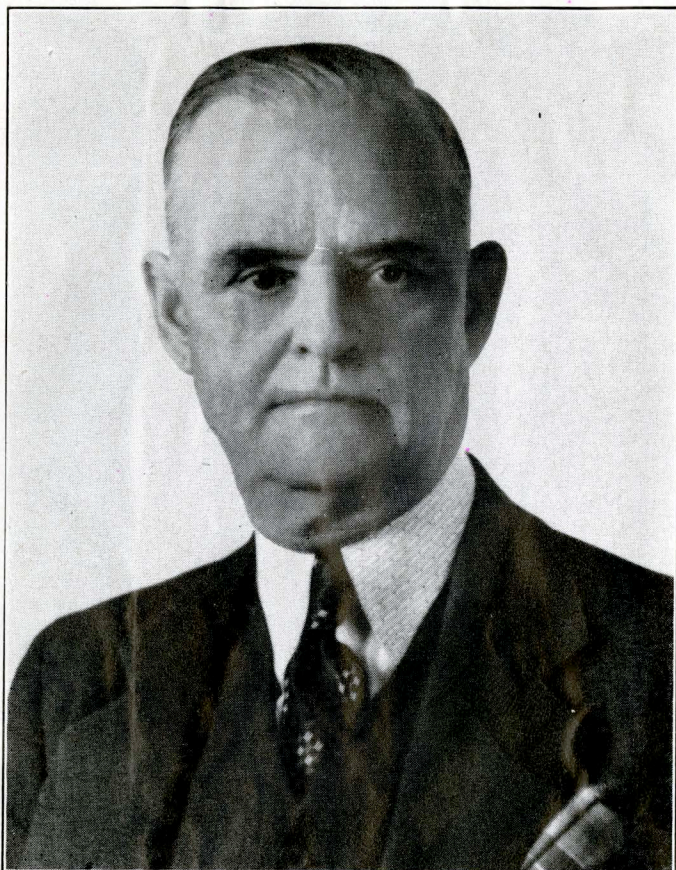
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Where can wisdom be found?  
And where is the place of  
understanding?



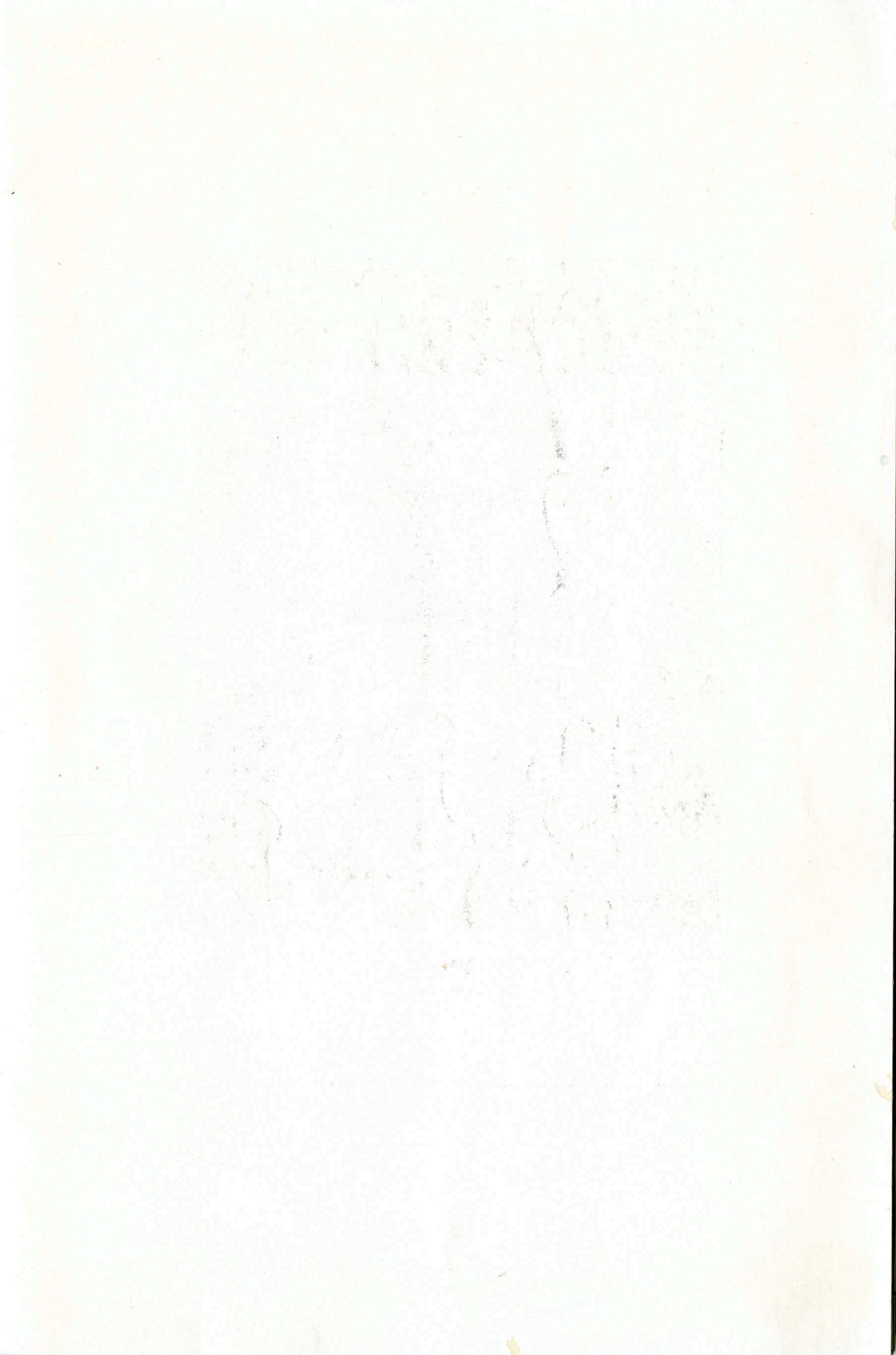
Behold the fear of the Lord,  
that is wisdom;  
And to depart from evil is  
understanding.

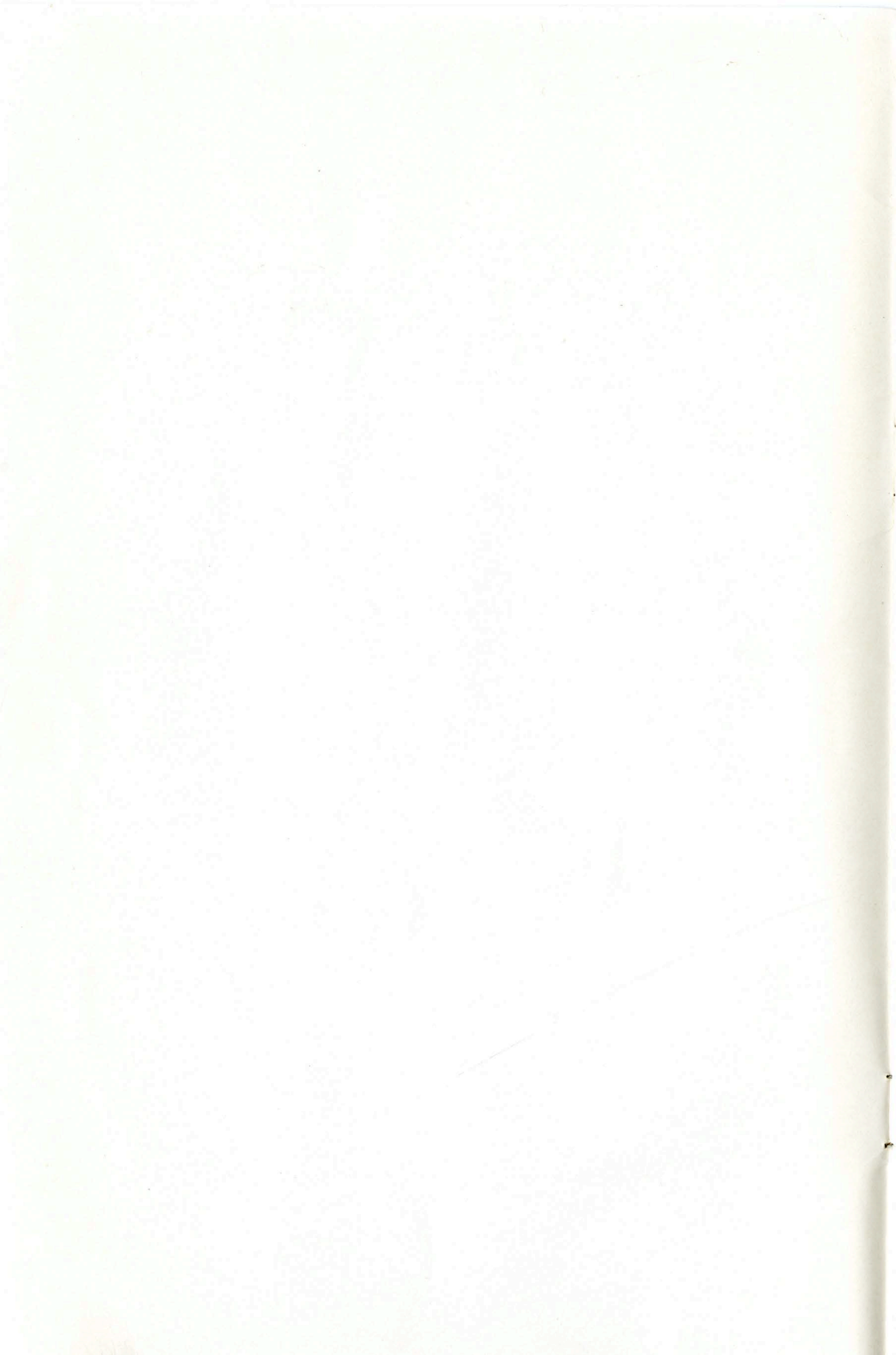


G. H. P. SHOWALTER  
A. B. A. M., LL. D.

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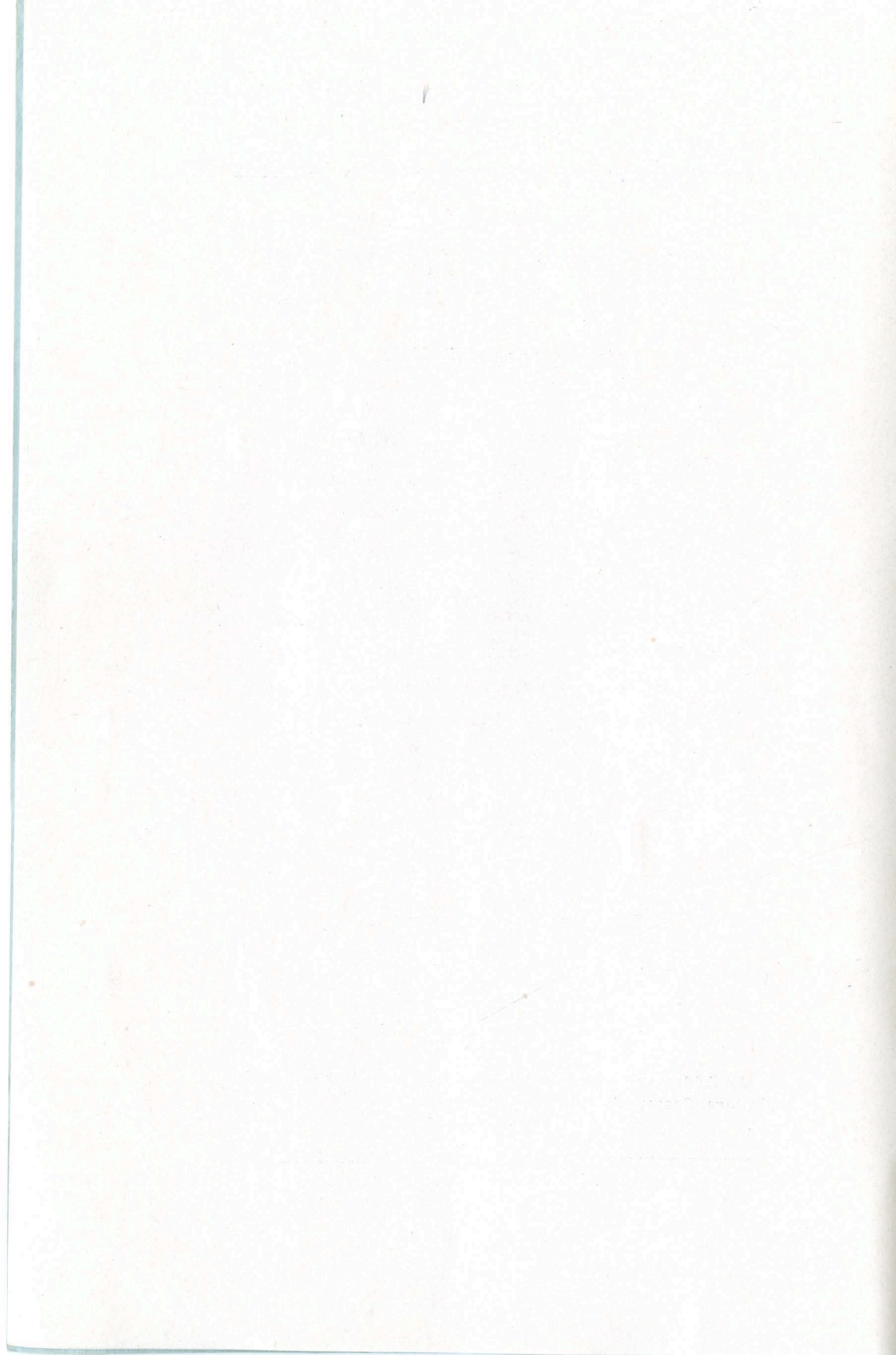


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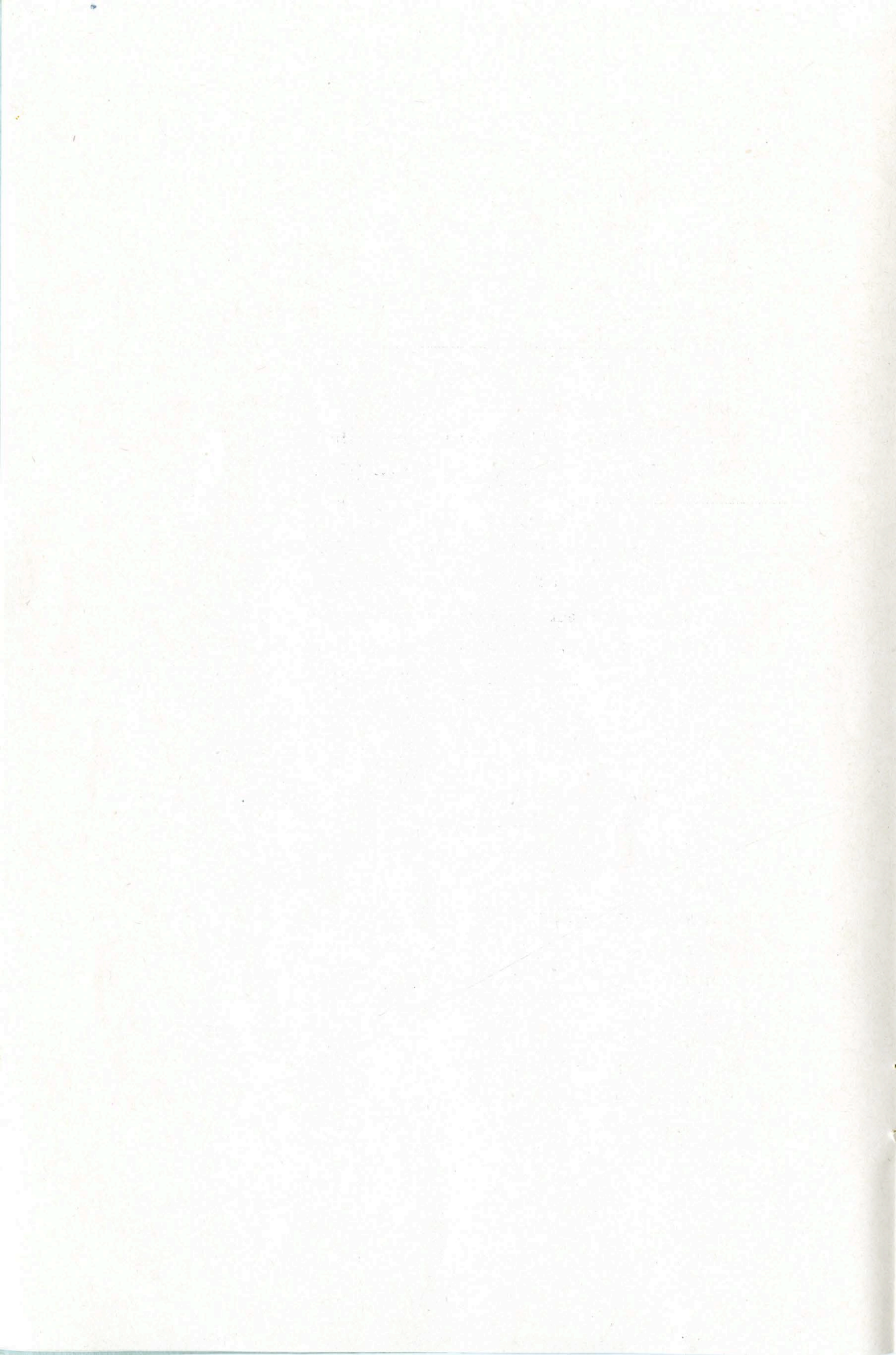
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His name shall be called  
Wonderful, Counsellor, The  
mighty God, The everlasting Fa-  
ther, The Prince of Peace. Of the  
increase of his government and  
peace there shall be no end, upon  
the throne of David, and upon his  
kingdom, to order it, and to estab-  
lish it with justice from henceforth  
even for ever.

ISA. 9:6, 7

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# CHRIST IN HISTORY

## *An Appreciation*

The coming of the Lord and Redeemer of men was at a time most auspicious. Wars had ceased and the vast empire of Augustus was at peace. The gates of the temple of Janus were closed. The god of war was effectively jailed after an unintermitting and horrible rampage. of more than two hundred years. The Roman soldiers idled in their camps with nothing to do but read of how Julius, the first and greatest of the Caesars, led his invincible legions to scores of victories in Gaul, and how he brought many captives home to Rome whose ransom filled the coffers of the public treasury, or supplied funds for lavish gifts to influential political friends who might cooperate with him in paving his way to autocratic power. Whether by patriotism, or fear, it matters not here to surmise, but quiet reigned supreme in the far flung provinces of the great empire. A mild military constabulary held an easy and complete control in the more populous centers. The people rested in peace, every man under his own vine and fig tree, and pursued the peaceful arts of husbandry and of commerce. Men of letters loitered about the forum or the market places, and matched their wits on such questions as the nature of man, or other matters of impelling interest sprung by the Greek philosophers at a time that was now already ancient history or on the still more absorbing and difficult studies of the deities, and the grotesque creations of their priests in mythological lore. In all walks of life they loved to linger long, one with another, to recite traditions of

the glorious past when some of their mighty military leaders saved the country by heroic achievement on the battlefield, and when captives led in chains and ensigns rolled in blood graced a glorious "Triumph" through the historic streets of the imperial city.

At such a time in a remote province in Palestine Jesus was born—a Savior, Christ the Lord. At such a time the holy messengers from heaven descended with a chorus of wondrous joy to the astonished shepherds on Judaeian hills—"Glory to God in the Highest, and on earth, peace, good will toward men."

The coming of the Christ, the Messiah, the God-man to earth, was no surprise. The inhabitants of the earth were in readiness, and in anxious expectation. In heart, and mind, and life, they were in a state of preparation. But their preparation—all of it—was ill-timed, improper, insufficient, and entirely inappropriate. They expected one who never came. They anxiously longed and waited in vain. They looked for a great general whose genius would give them victory over their enemies, material prosperity and progress, and political ascendancy. Many do yet. They still exult in the gory horrors and tragedies of war. They still clamor for a leader whom they may adore—and, even now, they subserviently worship men who have attained to celebrity through bloody achievements and ruthless "mass executions." The man of the day was, and is, the heartless hero (?) who is adamant to all the gentler, benevolent impulses of the soul—who bids to mercy, and the tender sympathies of the human heart, a long farewell—who wades through slaughter to a throne and shuts the gates of mercy on mankind. But they looked—never-

theless. All the nations of the earth—so far at least as they had annals, and records, and history, and poetry and philosophy which have survived the vicissitudes of time and the disintegrations of the centuries—looked with anxious, feverish expectation for the dawn of a new day—the inauguration of a glorious age and dispensation when want and penury would vanish from the earth, when sorrow and sighing would cease, and the human race would enter into a life of higher joy and supreme exaltation. The lines of Vergil the poet, reflect the mental attitude of the Romans:

*“ . . . and those times, pregnant with the most stupendous events, will begin to roll on.”*

But the Bible account of the visit of the wise men from the east (Matt. 21:1-3) is in evidence. How came these oriental stargazers to know that a “King of the Jews” was about to be born? The star of wisdom rose at Athens—it glittered awhile and then was gone. Like a meteor it flashed, to draw the attention of great thinkers throughout the inhabited earth, only to disappear from the spiritual and intellectual heavens into the darkness of the horizon of the finite and incomplete, and imperfect, in men. But the Star of Bethlehem shines more and more unto the perfect day. The Christ is lifted up in glory, exaltation, supremacy and power and all men are drawn unto him.

The Christ of Galilee has brought to men life and faith and hope and love. These are the mighty forces that are fundamental to the joys of salvation. They are the foundations which secure to helpless, hopeless souls the unspeakable joys of the higher life—

the fuller, better life—and are the unshaken and unshakable guarantees of the realization of the fruitions of hope. Christ lived that men might live, and died that men might not die, but live. He taught men just how to live that they might realize the most out of life. A Christian—a real Christian—consistent, earnest, faithful, perfect, as God is perfect—is the only one who can possibly realize the most there is in life and the highest measure of happiness for time and eternity. Christians are the only ones who have, or can experience the realization and fulfillment of the divine “promise of the life that now is and of that also which is to come.” And, the reason is apparent. They have become, and are, and will be, the special imitators of the Christ—they seek after him so closely that they simply “follow in his footsteps.” He did no evil nor was guile found on his lips. And that is the goal to which we are bound and which we will ultimately reach in the better progress of the higher life that leads right “on unto perfection.”

Christ lived but a short time on the earth. He was crucified while still a young man. The incomparable work which he wrought was accomplished not only within a very short period of time, but without the advantage and benefit of personal contacts with foreign peoples by travels into distant lands. His public labors in the proclamation of heaven’s message to earth, were encompassed within the brief span of three years, and yet his teaching soon spread throughout the habitable globe, and revolutionized thought, religion and philosophy. Like a mighty undulation of the vast waters of the great deep, started by some

mammoth seismic disturbance of unprecedented force and extent, so the gracious influence of the doctrine of Christ rolled on and on till it enveloped the whole world and transformed the lives of the human race. Men and nations adopted new standards of value and laid new predicates for reason. Old things passed away and all things became new. Those elements of character once mean and despised, were, have been, are, and will be magnified and exalted as one of the results of the salutary influence of the teaching of Jesus of Nazareth. Qualities and attributes of life once worthless in man's estimation, have come to be more precious than silver and gold, and to be sought after as hid treasure. It was Jesus who drew aside the curtain and made for man the discovery that humility, lowliness, gentleness, kindness and a forgiving spirit, are treasures of incomparable value. And he it was who by his teaching, has led men to a realization that the treasures and pleasures of earth fade into insignificance when compared with and contrasted with the true riches—the treasures laid up in heaven.

What think ye of Christ? Whose son is he? These are the questions that challenge the attention of all the intelligences of earth. These are the questions that have engaged the minds of the greatest thinkers of all the generations of men since Jesus was born in Bethlehem. Before him there had not risen in the history of the world a character that challenged the admiration and homage of all people of all lands. Different nations had their heroes then as now—but no one so great and wonderful as to be the outstanding Leader of all the peoples, languages, and tribes



of all the earth. Hannibal was the ideal of the Carthaginians, Caesar of the Romans, Charlemagne and Napoleon of France, Washington of America. But they were national leaders and heroes only—Christ was, and is the world leader—the hero, the Savior, the deliverer of all nations—the only one who has yet merited or received the honor of being the “desire of the nations”—in all nations. Why is this? What is the explanation? And why was it that before the coming of Christ the people of all lands were in expectation that some Great One was to come? They looked forward as to the passing events of their day—why? We look backward. We date all events and all documents, “In the year of our Lord”—and this is true of all enlightened nations. Why? With common consent the whole world takes the birth of Christ as the accepted date for the chronicle of the annals of time. They refer to what transpired before (B. C.) the coming of this illustrious one, and after (A. D.) his coming. Such distinction stands alone. It is not only unique—it is marvelous. What possible explanation can be given? Is it not fair to allow that he himself be permitted to speak for himself—to tell whence he came, who he was, and is. Let us hear him. He declares that he came from God and that he is the Son of God.

There are three considerations that stand as an impregnable defense of the Christian's faith.

1. No man ever spake like this man.
  2. No man ever taught like this man.
  3. No man ever did the works that this man did.
- Then he was more than man. Christ himself said

he did the work that none other ever did. Nicodemus a distinguished teacher of the Jews said to the Christ, "We know that thou art a teacher sent from God; for no man can do the miracles which thou doest except God be with him." And, friendly hearer, what sayest thou?

The fact that no man ever spake as he spoke, taught as he taught, did the wonders that he performed, and the indubitable attestations of history point unerringly to the necessary and unavoidable conclusion that Jesus is the Christ the divine Son of God.

All hail the power of Jesus' name,  
 Let angels prostrate fall  
 Bring forth the royal diadem  
 And crown him Lord of all.

Great leaders have had before them clearly defined ideals. The realization of these was the measure of their success. The mighty conquests of distinguished military leaders and the subsequent founding of empires followed the successful outcome of the arbitrament in arms. They attained to the ephemeral glory for which they longed and for which they were willing to stake all. All of their own and that of thousands of others they gladly brought as a willing sacrifice to place on the altar of an insatiable ambition. Christ had an aim, a purpose, an ideal—the loftiest and most sublime that the world has ever heard, or the tongue of man has ever named. The divine philanthropy in the remedial system passes the comprehension of the mind of man. The gift of God through Christ, the

inspired apostle declares to be "unspeakable." The loftiest superlatives of the language of the human race, are, as yet, inadequate to express in corresponding terms, the ineffable love of heaven and of heaven's Ruler—and the great apostle gives expression to this in that sublimely simple, and simply sublime declaration: "The love of God passes knowledge."

Napoleon Bonaparte was brilliant and ambitious above most of his fellows. He led loyal, conquering hosts to victory on scores of battlefields and brought proud and powerful armies arrayed against him to humiliating shame, defeat, and disaster. But when he had baptized all Europe in blood, and had sated his thirst for empire on many gory fields—when his star that rose so brilliantly at Austerlitz had set forever at Waterloo—as he faced the rapidly lengthening shadows of life's, fitful, and now closing day, in his lonely banishment—in shame and humiliation—on the sea-girt island of Saint Helena, he assumed one of those fine, reflective, philosophical moods for which this illustrious genius was noted, and to an officer who commanded the little military constabulary that guarded him in his prison in the sea, said in sadness:

"Hannibal and Caesar and Charlemagne and I have all founded empires. Our crowns have fallen and our thrones have crumbled. Not one of these mighty empires stands today. As for me, while I was with my men, they would die for me. But where is the French soldier today who would strike for Napoleon? Not one. While I was with them in person, they loved me, followed me, and were loyal to me. But I am soon to die on this lonely island at the hand of a

British oligarchy, and not a soldier in the armies of France would strike for me. But eighteen centuries have gone, Jesus, an humble carpenter of Nazareth, in Palestine, founded an empire—his empire was founded on love—and today there are thousands who would die for the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth. Our empires and states were founded on force and blood—his was founded in love. I tell you Jesus Christ was not a man.”

All the enlightened nations of the earth today have attained to celebrity and to greatness because they were built on the ethics of Jesus Christ our Lord. He was, himself, an humble man—a man of sorrows, acquainted with grief. But his life and his words were with power, and that power was, has been, and will be felt. Lowly and meek, and compassionate, and merciful, he went about doing good. He did not seek the vindication of force, nor have resort to the coercion of arms. He was not a lawyer, but all law, and all lawyers, and all lawgivers, quote his precepts and resort to them for vindication of their cause. He was not an orator, but the greatest and most eloquent orations that have been delivered during the sixty generations of men since he left the earth had their inspiration in his life. Thousands of great sermons and orations are delivered every week in our own day as a monument to his unprecedented career among men. He was not a writer—not one fragment of his writings has been preserved. Yet today many times more is being written about him than about any other person that ever lived, and this has persisted through the centuries that have silently slipped away since

he lived on the earth. More of the matter contained in books, records, documents, papers, pamphlets and periodicals are either directly or indirectly with reference to him than all other great men that have ever lived and died. He was not a sculptor, but the greatest creations of the greatest sculptors were inspired by his life. The same is true in painting and in poetry. Though he was neither, his life and teaching has stirred poets and painters to those attainments in these arts that lay claim to excellence. The greatest executions on the canvas, and the greatest, as well as the most numerous, poetical compositions, have to do with his amazing life and wonderful teaching.

To accept and apply in the heart and life, the teaching of the Man of Galilee is the highest expression of wisdom—the consummation of all prudence. He is the soul's strong defense—the world's only hope—the one pre-eminently worthy of our confidence and service. He justly merits the praise and adoration of all men. To know him is to inherit eternal life—to love and obey him is a gracious privilege—a high and distinguished honor.

As the generations of men come and go, and the centuries become lost in the successive ages, and roll on and on, the true philosophy of life and of character, as expressed in the teaching of Jesus Christ, shines brighter and more glorious and its application in human conduct intensifies happiness and hope and brings the fullest measure of joy and of gladness.

The simplicity of his life makes him the easily approached and companionable associate and friend. No one was too lowly, too humble, too much out of the

way, to merit his notice and attract his attention. He was himself meek and lowly in spirit, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. The poor and despised, the outcasts in the estimation of men, felt at ease in his presence. And all this was and is wholly different from all the precedents of the grandees of earth. Those whom men called great, and call great, are those who have sought, and do seek and attain distinction and pre-eminence among their fellows. And the poor and weak and unworthy often shudder at their approach and tremble at their presence. They exercise a lordship over men designed to make others feel small in their presence, humbled and embarrassed. The presence and power of Jesus Christ was always but to sustain and help, to inspire hope, and to cause the poor and needy to rise, to look upward, and to feel, to realize and to know that light and hope and happiness were possible even to them.

Jesus Christ would not accept the repeated call of the people to be their king. He declined the proffer of imperial eminence and imperial honor. He refused the distinction of rule and authority and of sovereignty over the people. He took no part in the politics of the time, nor in the affairs of civil government. And yet all the common law, and all the constitutions of all enlightened lands, and of states, find their basis in the sermon on the mount, and the other simple, sacred and divine precepts that fell from his lips.

On next Lord's day, the first day of a new week, many thousands of groups of people, many very large assemblies, will convene in all the large cities, and small cities, and villages, and hamlets, and rural com-

munities to read, and study, and meditate upon the words of Jesus, his teachings, his precepts, his laws. Not as a national hero, but as the universally conceded international and world Leader in thought, in morals, in religious philosophy, and in the loftiest and most sublime ideals of life that have yet been conceived in the mind of men. Not the hero of any one nation, but the desire of all nations, the one who by common consent is the one worthy and pre-eminent character. And ten thousand of the greatest and most eloquent sermons and orations will be given in his praise and honor, in our own country alone, and in the same degree in the other nations of the world. All the great men of all time from the beginning of the world down to the present, do not and will not provoke the smallest fraction of one per cent of all this attention, this oratory and eloquence. And the amazement of all things is that on the first day of the following week and of each successive week this unparalleled distinction will continue, as it has persisted already through centuries of the era since the name and fame and doctrine of Christ became a power among men.

There were great men in the world while our Savior lived, and many thousands before that time, in and through the ages gone. Why is it that not one of them, nor all of them combined—thousands of heroes, sages, kings, princes, and governors, philosophers and statesmen, scientists, historians, sculptors, poets and painters, founders of great empires and states, leaders and conquerors, and founders of religions—why is it that none of these has been remembered and

honored in a way comparable to the way in which Jesus Christ the Prophet of Galilee has been remembered, honored and praised? Only a few, here and there, have found a place in history and are entered in the annals of time. As to the rest their very names have passed into oblivion.

He is more than man—he is—he must be—the divine Son of God. He merits our most fervent, devoted, persistent, unflinching, and inalienable love. Should we not prize it as the highest and most distinguished honor to serve him faithfully and to imitate the unspeakable excellencies of his life? His exaltation is now supreme—God has highly exalted him, at his own right hand in the heavens, far above all principality, and power, and dominion and might. He is pre-eminently worthy of the praise and adoration of all the intelligences of earth and heaven. At his feet the hierarchs of heaven fall, and the angels delight to cast their glittering crowns, and exalt his name in unceasing ascriptions of praise. To him, at last, every knee shall bow, and every tongue shall proclaim him as the peerless sovereign of the universe, crowned with glory, honor, and majesty—while they sing through the courts of the upper world redemption's sweet story—the song of Moses and of the Lamb—and repeat the triumphant shout:

“Bring forth the royal diadem, and crown him Lord of all.”



